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Environment Secretary Takes Action to Close Controversial Las Vegas Station

(Santa Fe, NM) –New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Secretary Ron Curry has partially granted the Public Service Company of New Mexico's (PNM) motion concerning his recent Final Order for the Las Vegas Generating Station.

NMED's revised Order, signed today by Secretary Curry, includes a commitment from PNM to decommission the 30-year-old, diesel powered electric plant within four years. While the plant remains in use, NMED will allow PNM to give less than eight hours notice before the plant is fired-up in certain emergency situations. This emergency provision will shorten power outages for citizens in the Las Vegas area. NMED's Order retains the strong restriction on hours of operation and mandatory emissions monitoring required by the original document. These restrictions were incorporated into the permit based on the input of members of the public.

"I am happy that PNM has pledged to shut this plant down," said Secretary Curry. "However, looking at what needs to get done to shut one plant and open another farther away from homes in the Las Vegas community, I believe they can do it in two and a half years, not four. We urge PNM to get this chapter closed as quickly as possible. Until that time, NMED will use this permit to strongly regulate this plant and protect the health of the people of Las Vegas."

The Las Vegas Generating Station was built 30 years ago and had been grandfathered into the air quality regulations. Until it is closed, NMED's Title V permit will allow the Department to monitor the plant and ensure that it meets state and federal air quality standards. Approximately 100 citizens attended the public hearing concerning this permit in November, including representatives of Las Vegas CARES and the Southwest Organizing Project.

The permit must now be submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for approval. EPA has 45 days to rule in this matter.

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For further information, please contact Jon Goldstein, NMED Communication Director at (505) 827-0314.